

To: Smith, Paula[Smith.Paula@epa.gov]
From: Jenkins, Laura Flynn
Sent: Tue 8/18/2015 1:48:31 PM
Subject: Re: Agency watchdog to probe mine spill

Any idea what role(s) OCPI-IO might play in this investigation? I served as lead on responses to 5 OIG audits/investigations in the Office of Homeland Security. Not that I'm exactly volunteering, especially if this outside our purview, but I do have the experience, if you need me! □

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On Aug 18, 2015, at 7:42 AM, Smith, Paula <Smith.Paula@epa.gov> wrote:

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Russo, Rebecca" <Russo.Rebecca@epa.gov>
Date: August 18, 2015 at 7:19:02 AM MDT
To: "Smith, Paula" <Smith.Paula@epa.gov>
Subject: Agency watchdog to probe mine spill

This isn't surprising news, but will likely be a resource issue for the Region, so should be considered for planning purposes.

EPA:

Agency watchdog to probe mine spill

Robin Bravender, E&E reporter

Published: Monday, August 17, 2015

U.S. EPA's internal watchdog office is investigating the spill that released millions of gallons of polluted water into Colorado and New Mexico river systems.

The agency's inspector general notified EPA officials today that it plans to research the causes of the Aug. 5 spill as well as EPA's response.

The watchdog office launched the investigation in response to a request from Congress, according to the notice to EPA. The probe will be conducted at EPA's Denver-based Region 8 office and EPA headquarters.

The accident -- triggered by an EPA team investigating contamination at the Gold King mine in southwestern Colorado -- spilled about 3 million gallons of water containing pollutants like arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury into a tributary of the Animas River.

EPA's watchdogs won't be the only ones looking into the spill.

The accident has sparked outrage among EPA's critics, and state and federal officials have also vowed to scrutinize the agency's response (E&ENews PM, Aug. 12).

House Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop (R-Utah) said his panel will conduct "extensive oversight" when Congress reconvenes next month; Colorado Sen. Cory Gardner (R) also called for oversight hearings (E&ENews PM, Aug. 11).

During her visit to Durango, Colo., near the Animas River, last week, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said the agency would halt its investigation work at all mines and tailing facilities nationwide in the wake of the accident. She said EPA is also evaluating the accident (Greenwire, Aug. 13).

"We will learn lessons from this," McCarthy said, adding that EPA "takes full responsibility."

She said EPA will hold itself "to a higher standard than anyone else."

Rebecca A. Russo

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